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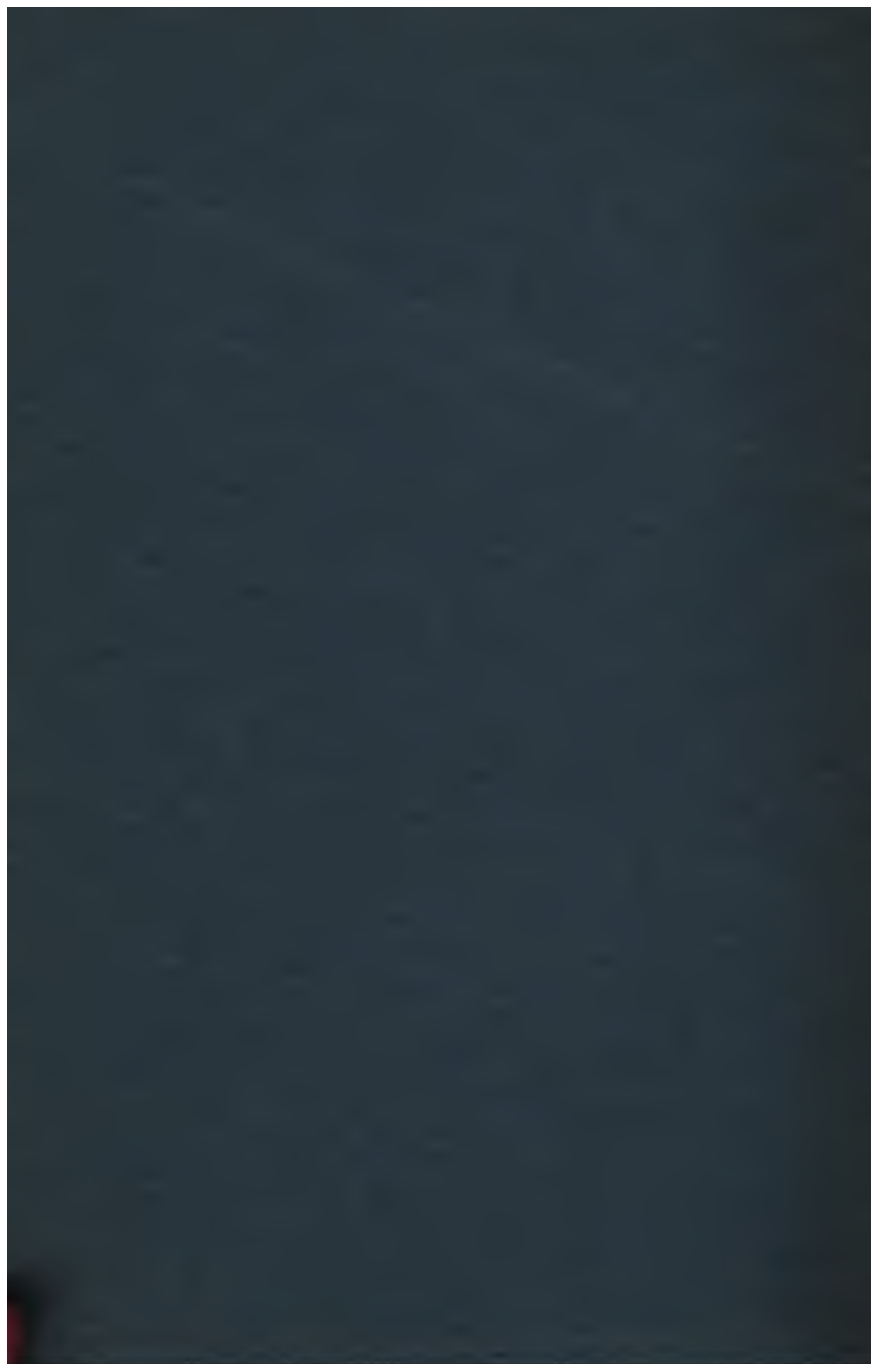
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ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS













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# Spires and Poplars



ALFRED R. BELLINGER



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1917-1919.



J. C. F.

**T**HESE songs of France are little worth  
Unless it be to one who knew  
The various soil from which they grew,  
The melancholy and the mirth,  
Strange plenitude and stranger dearth  
That lent their influence unto  
These songs of France.

Then take them, John, who saw their birth,  
For none can know so well as you  
How out of blood and out of dew  
There blossomed on that sacred earth  
These songs of France.



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ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS

## II.

**A**USTERE and gray the walls without ;  
Within, a quietness that glows  
With heavenly colors all about,  
With gorgeous blue and gold and rose.  
The ancient columns seem to doze  
That guard so sure, so silently,  
This dim cathedral sanctity.

With song, with clamor and with shout  
Down the long street the column goes :  
Here kneel the weary and devout.  
The winter sun descending throws  
Its rays through wondrous glass that shows  
Old saints who still benignant see  
This dim cathedral sanctity.

This is no time for sloth or doubt ;  
We may not dally with repose.  
The day needs zealous men and stout,  
With faces set against our foes.  
Yet, when the work is done—who knows ?  
Eternity itself may be  
This dim cathedral sanctity.











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IX.

**T**HE almond tree has blossomed out  
In spite of winter and of wind.  
Better its flowered faith and blind  
Than bare discretion born of doubt.  
Let him that would misfortune flout  
Look to the hills, and he shall find  
The almond tree.

Who would suspect a heart so stout  
In that frail stem for spring designed—  
For spring, whose coming sure and kind  
Is heralded in white about  
The almond tree.

X.

**A** LONELY wooden cross  
Upon a foreign soil  
Is all that marks my loss.  
A lonely wooden cross  
Among the pines that toss  
In ceaseless, fruitless toil.  
A lonely wooden cross  
Upon a foreign soil.

XI.

**N**ow God be thanked the spring has come again,  
And all the hope and happiness of spring  
After these weary months of sullen rain  
Have leapt to life at the year's blossoming.  
Oh, hark! the season's tender heralding  
Where, half uncertain, from the hedge hard by  
The reminiscent birds begin to sing;  
For song is holy and can never die.

Our hearts that through these winter months have lain  
Passive and dumb to aught that life could bring  
Beat nobly in their old accustomed strain  
Before the magic of that carolling.  
Winter and weariness are on the wing,  
The winds with music have swept clear the sky,  
The very trees make music as they swing,  
For song is holy and can never die.

Yet war is ever present and its pain,  
Sorrow and loss have still their ancient sting,  
The menace and the tragedy remain.  
The foe advancing, commoner and king,  
Trample our fanes and grim defiance fling  
To God and man. Our steadfast hearts and high  
With song move forward to his chastening,  
For song is holy and can never die.

What though should perish every lovely thing  
That man hath made his heart to gratify?  
They still should live for man's remembering  
For song is holy and can never die.

XII.

**W**e laughed and parted, nevermore to meet  
In this fair world of April green and blue.  
The whimsical companionship was through,  
The gay, light-hearted interlude complete.  
Rising from the green bank that was our seat,  
Jesting at life, as we were wont to do,  
We laughed and parted, nevermore to meet  
In this fair world of April green and blue.  
Why did I never say how passing sweet  
Had been the days that I had spent with you?  
I almost thought you felt the impulse too—  
The chance was gone, and, rising to our feet,  
We laughed and parted, nevermore to meet.

**XIII.**

**T**HE sun in heaven is bright  
On fields with clover gay.  
After the breathless fight  
The sun in heaven is bright,  
And his benignant light  
Covers the dead today.  
The sun in heaven is bright  
On fields with clover gay.

XIV.

**T**HIS palace gods might make their throne  
And in these gardens take their ease.  
How kingly sumptuous the stone  
Among the ancient guardian trees!  
But, oh, more excellent than these  
The sweet contentment of the sky,  
The all but summer of Versailles!

We, happily, have never grown  
Too worn upon by life to seize  
Such fleeting moments of our own  
To live eternal harmonies.  
This charm all apprehension flees  
And weariness is banished by  
The all but summer of Versailles.

Tomorrow each must go alone  
To what the fates of war shall please.  
The shadow of the vague unknown  
Lies yonder. Though our victories  
Be bought with many tragedies  
We shall remember, you and I,  
The all but summer of Versailles.

XV.

**B**RIGHT as a single poppy in a field  
This perfect afternoon has been to me,  
Breaking the long days of monotony  
As with a flash of scarlet. It shall yield  
Full many a song whose music lay concealed  
Until this magic moment set it free.  
Bright as a single poppy in a field  
This perfect afternoon has been to me,  
For where the summer woodland made a shield  
Against the jargon of humanity  
I looked beneath the veil of tragedy  
And saw immortal gaiety revealed  
Bright as a single poppy in a field.

XVI.

**T**HE day he died, that last triumphant day,  
Found him untainted with the thought of fear,  
Facing the sudden death that crashed so near  
Supremely lovable, supremely gay,  
How buoyant and how swift! Who would not pray  
So to burst into Heaven with a cheer!  
The day he died, that last triumphant day,  
Found him untainted with the thought of fear.  
How can we pity him of whom men say  
"Our bravest and our best is fallen here"?  
Ah, we are proud of him, who held him dear,  
And we remember that he led the way  
The day he died, that last triumphant day.



XVII.

**I**n calm and ancient dignity the Seine  
Sweeps through the town of towns beneath the bow  
Of many a bridge, and, with a half disdain,  
Ripples about their massive piers below,  
Confined, yet patient to endure it so.  
On either border of its mighty swell  
The art of ages flourishes I know,  
But I love best the gentle voiced Moselle.

The broad Garonne moves silent to the main  
And lingers all along its course as though  
It loved the vanished highlands and were fain  
To shun the roar and hurry of Bordeaux.  
There rise the poplar trees in stately row  
And cast upon the soul a subtle spell  
With weaving of their branches to and fro,  
But I love best the gentle voiced Moselle.

Unhurried through the heart of the Touraine  
The lordly Loire's historic waters flow,  
And sing in proud and reminiscent strain  
The deathless glories of the high châteaux.  
With old romance the valley is aglow  
For there the unforgotten splendors dwell  
And great traditions of the long ago—  
But I love best the gentle voiced Moselle.

Upon the fruitful bosom of the plain  
In spring beside the upper Marne they sow.  
The summer makes it glorious with grain  
And flowered loveliness the meadows show.  
Along the stream the scented breezes blow,  
The blossoms of the field are sweet to smell,  
And sweet the fragrance of the grass they mow.  
But I love best the gentle voiced Moselle.

With mingled memories of pride and pain  
The Meuse moves seaward, tortuous and slow,

Forever dreaming of the bitter gain  
Of those bare ruins, purchased with our woe,  
Silent save where the melancholy crow  
Flaps on above that long extinguished hell,  
While on our dead the trees their blossoms strow.  
But I love best the gentle voiced Moselle.

Time was when wild and bloody ran the Aisne  
To witness the confusion of the foe,  
And never shall the stream forget that stain  
Though whitened with a thousand winters' snow.  
Here too lie our heroic dead, and, oh,  
We love the spot. Forever where they fell  
Memorials of scarlet poppies grow.  
But I love best the gentle voiced Moselle.

Ah, streams of France, your varied beauties throw  
Their charm about my heart: I love you well.  
On each his excellence the gods bestow  
But I love best the gentle voiced Moselle.

XVIII.

**H**ERE once a village stood  
That was the home of men  
Who lived when God was good.  
Here once a village stood,  
And all this blasted wood  
Was green with summer then.  
Here once a village stood  
That was the home of men.

**XIX.**

**I**N honor and in triumph, O my friend,  
Your soul has gone beyond my mortal view  
And left me with the poignant need of you  
Which later fellowships can never mend.  
I prayed, with you beside me to ascend  
The heights of life. We should have won thereto  
In honor and in triumph. O my friend,  
Your soul has gone beyond my mortal view.  
Yet, to my spirit still your soul shall lend  
Courage and strength. Clear eyed, as you would do,  
I face the challenge of my life anew,  
And know that you will meet me in the end  
In honor and in triumph, O my friend.

XX.

**T**HE wood of Apremont is still and cold,  
Its laughing leaves are dust, its birds are fled,  
And never shall it echo as of old  
To rustle and to piping overhead.

Autumn has come with russet and with red;  
Evening has come with glory and with gold.  
They cannot exorcise the chill and dread.  
The wood of Apremont is still and cold.

Beneath its leaves quaint tales and gay were told,  
Within its shades what tender words were said  
What time the black thrush sang! But now, behold,  
Its laughing leaves are dust, its birds are fled.

Its noons were noisy with the children's tread,  
Its evenings sang of lovers as they strolled.  
But now is only silence and the dead,  
And never shall it echo as of old.

The spring shall find it blasted trunks and mold  
And weeds on ruin and corruption fed.  
Anemones shall nevermore unfold  
To rustle and to piping overhead.

But God who counteth blood that hath been shed,  
Whom naught escapeth, sad or base or bold,  
Shall give to it eternity instead,  
And in the woods of heaven shall be enrolled  
The wood of Apremont.

**XXI.**

**T**HOSE ruined walls of stone  
Had been the house of prayer.  
The weeds had overgrown  
Those ruined walls of stone,  
But I went in alone  
Awhile to worship there.  
Those ruined walls of stone  
Had been the house of prayer.

**XXII.**

**A** YEAR ago on Hempstead plain  
Across the snow the wind was keen,  
And bitter little gusts would glean  
Dead leaves where, in the quiet lane,  
With memories of summer rain  
Under the hedge the grass was green  
A year ago.

Oh, would that I might once again  
Breathe in that wind so white and clean!  
I was at peace, I had not seen  
This dreary dwelling place of pain  
A year ago.

XXIII.

I LOVED her for the laughter in her eyes  
Which all the world at war could not subdue.  
Life's glory and life's bitterness she knew,  
And hopeless dawns and vivid noonday skies  
Were in the texture of her spirit, wise  
And calm and gay as the eternal blue.  
I loved her for the laughter in her eyes  
Which all the world at war could not subdue.  
O splendid alchemy that could surprise  
The brightness of existence shining through  
Its chaos and its clouds, and so make true  
The golden hope of joy that in us lies.  
I loved her for the laughter in her eyes.



XXIV.

**T**HE distant cannons' steady roar  
Last night was loud, and now they cease!  
How strange that we shall hear no more  
The distant cannons' steady roar!  
For we have grown so used to war;  
So inconceivable is peace.  
The distant cannons' steady roar  
Last night was loud, and now—they cease.

**XXV.**

**S**LEEP in this sacred earth, the strife is done.  
Failure and triumph both are laid to rest  
Upon the all-forgiving mother's breast  
In equal peace beneath the kindly sun.  
Never again shall trumpet call or gun  
Arouse you to take up the bitter quest.  
Sleep in this sacred earth, the strife is done.  
Failure and triumph both are laid to rest.  
Save God himself alone there now is none  
Who can divide the baser from the best  
Or weigh the worth of the unworthiest.  
But they that hopeless fought and they that won  
Sleep in this sacred earth. The strife is done.

XXVI.

**I**s it not strange that by this shore  
We two should walk together thus  
And all in idleness discuss  
The pleasant days that are no more,  
We who, a little time before,  
Counted these lands half fabulous ?  
Is it not strange ?

Dreadful to many is the score  
Of battle, aye, and onerous,  
But when such times recall to us  
The fruit that we have reaped of war—  
Is it not strange ?

XXVII.

THIS land of vivid skies and sparkling seas  
Blue beyond all imagining of blue!  
This land of oranges upon the trees  
More golden than the fabled fruit that grew  
In the Hesperides! Can it be true  
That we have lived to see the struggle cease,  
That clouds and battle are transmuted to  
The gaiety of Christmas and of Nice?

How wonderful to wander at our ease  
With none to watch or hinder what we do!  
Here are no testy godlings to appease,  
No fruitless, empty labors to eschew;  
No purpose but our fancies to pursue,  
Our duty to give thanks for our release  
And, every splendid hour, to prove anew  
The gaiety of Christmas and of Nice.

Care is a monster, doubt is a disease  
And melancholy but a witches' brew.  
This is no time for phantoms such as these.  
Myrtle and roses mingle not with rue.  
Let us forget awhile! Our hours are few.  
Let song arise and revelry increase.  
'Twere shame to own that retrospection slew  
The gaiety of Christmas and of Nice!

Yet—friends too long unseen, the sight of you  
Here in the glory of the reborn peace  
Runs like a theme of deep thanksgiving through  
The gaiety of Christmas and of Nice.

XXVIII.

**W**E three before an open fire  
Holding the sum of man's desire  
Can warm our hands and laugh at fate,  
For this serene triumvirate  
Has all that mortal could require.

We touch the long forgotten lyre  
And day's crude clamorings retire,  
While happy on the Muses wait  
We three.

The war's last flickerings expire.  
With its monotony and mire  
Perish its tragedy and hate.  
And now—old thoughts and old debate,  
And, seeking visions new and higher,  
We three.

XXIX.

**M**ON père, incomparable host,  
Surely it comes to very few  
So broadly and so deep to view  
Your France. I with your eyes, I boast,  
A little saw, rejoicing most  
To find the eyes so wise and true,  
Mon père.

I drink—my heart is in the toast—  
To youth perpetual for you.  
Rich be your joys and ever new,  
Speedy your advent to our coast,  
Mon père.

XXX.

OLD ivy covered walls of gray  
That guard this dear secluded lane,  
Stand ye immutable for ay,  
Old ivy covered walls of gray.  
I take my leave of you today,  
    But I will surely come again,  
Old ivy covered walls of gray  
    That guard this dear secluded lane.

XXXI.

**S**OUTHWARD beside the Rhone in spring we sped,  
The river, turbulent and swollen, fed  
By melting snows from hills to left and right.  
Far off rose one indomitable height  
Ice crowned, but winter's mastery was dead,  
And lusty breezes from the sea had bred  
New leaves and blossoms by the river bed.  
And gay we journeyed, gladdened by the sight,  
Southward beside the Rhone.

Behind, the river dwindled to a thread.  
The sunset stained its yellow waters red ;  
The hills were touched with an unearthly light ;  
And still we sped beneath the coming night,  
With hearts and faces toward the sea ahead,  
Southward beside the Rhone.



XXXII.

**B**EHIND us faint and fainter grows the shore  
That was the whole of life to us of late.  
The sky is blue, and blue the waves that roar  
And beckon us with laughter where they wait.  
The breezes freshen to felicitate  
Our outward passage to the sunlit sea,  
For we are going home triumphantly!  
Yet, as the prow slips sweetly through the tide,  
We check our eagerness to turn aside  
A moment for one half regretful glance—  
One moment of affection and of pride:  
The time has come to bid farewell to France.

A little while and all that went before  
Of pain and passion, weariness and hate  
Shall be forgotten; we shall feel once more  
Old hopes revive, old labors fascinate.  
But this our parting we would dedicate  
Unto a life that now has ceased to be,  
And live again in this brief memory  
Our perils passed, our handicaps defied,  
The bitterness wherewith our souls were tried,  
And, over all, the bloom and the romance,  
The splendid vision that shall still abide  
Beyond the time to bid farewell to France.

Not all return, for some there be who bore  
The burden well, whose staunchness made us great,  
Who fainted not in the long strain of war  
Nor flinched in battle, loud, precipitate,  
Hot, overwhelming as the face of Fate;  
And from its midst were suddenly set free  
Into the quiet of eternity.  
Theirs is the light, which died not when they died,  
Which serves our generation as its guide;  
Theirs is the glorious inheritance  
To sleep, eternal comrades, side by side,  
And nevermore to bid farewell to France.

O sister land! Whate'er the years may hide  
Our common blood shall never be denied.  
Eager we came to thy deliverance,  
And, as we leave thee, wiser, clearer eyed  
We bid thee hail and then farewell, O France!



**POEMS TO SEVERAL PEOPLE.**



F. P. M.

**O** ICARUS, incarnate soul of flight,  
Insatiate of swiftness and of height,  
Fit comrade of the lark whose heart of fire  
Springs up ecstatic in a wild desire  
To quench the sun with song! To thee the sky  
Was home, the winds that laugh so sweet on high  
Gave eager welcome to thy kindred soul  
And thou, as Heaven itself had been thy goal,  
Up, up, and up in joyous fearlessness  
Wast wont to circle. Who can ever guess  
What blithe companionship with voiceless space  
Was thine in that free solitary race—  
What jocund converse with the sun by day  
And with the stars upon the milky way  
When thou wouldst seek for stardust at its source  
And fragrant night was cold about thy course?  
Flying itself was very life to thee,  
So dear that nothing but eternity  
Could tempt thee from it. Now thy flight is o'er.  
The summer sky shall never see thee more  
After that day when from a cloudy rift  
Thou divedst down to soar again more swift  
Than ever man has flown, in Heaven's light  
To satiate thy soul with perfect height  
O Icarus—thou disembodied flight!

M. M. H.

Do you remember when the spring was young  
The mornings when we walked abroad to see  
The little tender leaves upon the tree  
New green and all with tiny dewdrops hung?

Do you remember how the birds would sing  
And how the river in an undertone  
Laughed to itself, how bright the morning shone  
And every cloudlet seemed a living thing?

Those days are gone and cannot come again—  
Those light and pleasant days. From such as they,  
The essence of an evanescent May  
Departed utterly, what can remain?

Only the songs that never can be sung,  
The fragrance of imperishable flowers,  
Only the memory of golden hours  
And spotless mornings when the spring was young.

H. P. P.

O UR time was almost ended  
And we were left alone.  
O, half uncomprehended  
And yet most truly known,

I who am still your debtor  
In silence took your hand.  
How could I thank you better,  
Knowing you understand?

You burst my life asunder  
With your fantastic soul,  
Your weariness and wonder,  
Your bitter wit and droll;

Insulting dawn with sadness,  
Shocking the night with cheers  
And with a jocund madness  
Breathlessly close to tears.

Pain have I known and pleasure,  
Laughter and war and woe,  
And yet your spirit's treasure  
I can but dimly know.

Your spirit is a jewel  
Of fierce and lovely lights,  
Of tender flames and cruel,  
Of awful depths and heights.

You scorn and fear tomorrow,  
You mock and long for rest.  
All life is in your sorrow,  
All death is in your jest.

But, heart beyond my knowing,  
Yet closer to my heart  
Than all your overflowing  
Of fantasy and art,



Though all our laughter perish  
When all our tears are dead,  
We still shall have to cherish  
The words we left unsaid.

To speak would be to cheapen  
The things we cannot tell  
Which silence would but deepen—  
Hail, brother, and farewell!

H. P.

THEY were new buds, the leaves that now are falling,  
When last we met; they find us, I am sure,  
Unchanged at heart as now we sit recalling  
That distant other world of ours at Tours.

What motley whims and fancies to remember!  
The antic revels that were our delight,  
The fascination of the dying ember  
And golden laughter in the winter night.

In future years of too infrequent meeting  
Can any of that recollection last?  
Surely the sight of you, however fleeting,  
Will always call to mind that vivid past.

I still must pay, whatever comes hereafter,  
My homage to a faith that will not tire—  
A heart to turn the winter night to laughter  
And glorify the glow of dying fire.

C. L. W., WITH A MIRROR.

**L**AST year, as tribute to your gallant heart,  
Our scanty best of offerings we brought  
To you, and you with a surpassing art  
Made rich by your acceptance things of naught.

And I had nothing but my idle days—  
My gray and idle days to bring you there.  
Yet you transformed the empty gifts in ways  
Most wonderful, to make them passing fair.

Yours was a magic to outlast the war,  
A power to be perpetually true.  
And so, behold, I bring to you once more  
A gift to be made beautiful by you.

Z. S., JULY, 1917.

THE single lamp that lights the quiet room  
Sends ruddy rays athwart the outer gloom  
Where trees are motionless against the sky  
And, underneath, the roses are in bloom.

Thus sitting we can almost catch once more  
The old content we knew so well before  
Our academic peace was split in twain  
And we were burst upon by sudden war.

The old content! Withdrawing for a space  
From every contact with our time and place  
To be familiars of the kings of men  
And meet the godlike heroes face to face.

Thoughts of tomorrow's cares and tasks to drown  
How often have we talked the planets down  
While lights upon the campus one by one  
Went out, and all was silent in the town.

The nights when our philosophy was wrought  
By subtle skill of language and of thought  
Into vague likeness of eternal truth—  
What fool shall say that they were spent for naught?

What shall our later lives' fruition show  
That was not there innate, for even so  
The seed contains the rose that is to be—  
Who knows in what strange fields the rose will blow?

What sorcery is here that makes this night  
Unlike the bygone times of our delight  
When poetry made rich the printed page  
And stately visions rose upon our sight?

The hours with Homer and with Sophocles  
Were peaceful hours and sweet. Yet are not these  
As peaceful? Lo, the stars are in the sky  
And roses blooming underneath the trees.

The change is not about us but within,  
For we have felt the will to war begin  
And, in this matching of titanic powers,  
We know that to be idle were to sin.

And we are full of newborn restlessness,  
Unsatisfied to praise and to profess,  
Eager to prove us strong to give our all  
Or know ourselves for nothing, being less.

It matters not what foe or folly saith.  
That lives today which late was but a wraith:  
The transubstantiation hath been wrought—  
The wine of creed is made the blood of faith.

Friend of the best of these my younger days,  
Sharer alike of labors and of praise,  
The dayspring of our comradeship is past  
And we are at the parting of the ways.

War is a fickle master at the best  
And may divide us far as east from west.  
Who knows what nights like this may bring us soon,  
What weariness and bitter need of rest?

Lo, we are caught in world-compelling powers.  
Yet still the memory of other hours  
Shall fall upon my soul in nights to come  
Refreshing as the starlight on the flowers.

And you, although perchance your task be set  
In some far place beyond my vision, yet—  
We two together saw the bloom of life  
And well I know that you will not forget.

For this is not forever. Though it be  
The greatest thing our lives should ever see,  
War is ephemeral. But still abide  
The things we loved unto eternity.